DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 603 CS 508 773

AUTHOR Hugenberg, Lawrence W.
TITLE Preparing Students To Be Educated Communication Consumers.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (80th, New Orleans, LA, November 19-22, 1994).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Curriculum Evaluation; Higher Education; *Listening Skills; *Rhetoric; *Speech Communication; Student Needs; Thinking Skills; Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS *Communication Competencies; Speech Communication Education

ABSTRACT

Communication competence is too complex to assess as the result of one course in communication. If scholars in the field of communication tell accrediting agencies, administrators in higher education, state legislators, and/or the general public that students are competent communicators when they "pass" one communication course, they are doomed to failure. Before the issue of assessment can be addressed, scholars must identify the specific skills they want students to understand and practice in the basic course. At present there is little consensus about what ought to be taught in a communications course. The field of speech communication is in a quagmire. In many sectors it has not moved beyond the educational practices of Ancient Greece. While certain areas of the classical tradition are worth preserving, specifically, a continued emphasis on skills and a dedication to the inclusion of contemporary issues, a reorientation of instruction to incorporate a receiver-oriented approach ("consumerism") is in order. Instructors should cover the following areas, as understood from the viewpoint of the listener: (1) organization; (2) supporting materials; (3) reasoning; and (4) credibility. Communication educators must teach students to be skeptical of the messages they receive. If they fail in this area, they fail their students, their colleagues, they universities, their discipline and more importantly their society. (Contains 9 references.) (TB)

PREPARING STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED

COMMUNICATION CONSUMERS

Lawrence W. Hugenberg, Ph.D.
Department of Communication and Theater
Youngstown State University
410 Wick Avenue
Youngstown, Ohio 44555-3631
[216] 742-3633

Paper presented during the Speech Communication Association Convention, New Orleans, LA, November 1994.

PREPARING STUDENTS TO BE EDUCATED COMMUNICATION CONSUMERS

The basic course in communication is at a crossroads. As we prepare for the 21st century, the demands placed on communication educators to produce students who can communicate effectively continues to grow. Parents and faculty will continue to expect us to teach students to be good communicators. They will also continue to want us to do this in one oral communication course -- "to dream the impossible dream." Although an unrealistic expectation, it is reality. Accrediting agencies, university and college administrators, and the general public continue to raise questions related to the quality of the experience students have in higher education. As a result of this, communication educators face issues of assessment, accreditation, and teaching communication competence. These three issues are not necessary related to the same activities we perform in the classroom. For example, assessment demands we measure student effectiveness after completing the beginning communication course. The underlying assumption of this statement is that students are better communicators when they leave the basic course than when the enter it. Measuring this growth (or at least change) has become and will continue to be important to us. Nothing could place our discipline in more jeopardy than falling into this catch-22 trap. At best, and I mean <u>at best</u>, we should be able to tell accrediting agencies and administrators that students can perform certain skills better at the end of the basic course than when they entered the basic course.

Before we can discuss how to prepare students to become good communication

consumers, we have to identify the skills we want students to learn. Traditionally, our focus in basic communication courses has been on teaching speaking or talking skills. We teach students to be good public speakers, or how to participate in groups, of how to maintain good interpersonal relationships with others. We have paid little attention on helping students beyond teaching specific skills to be better "talkers". In my estimation, this is less than half the battle we face as communication educators. It is not my intention here to minimize the importance of teaching these skills; but we need to do more with the application of these skills in different ways. If we broaden the scope of the application of these skills to a receiver-orientation, and I am referring to more than teaching listening skills, then we might be able to help students to be come better consumers of communication in the future. Until we take this approach and make it a co-equal goal of basic communication instruction, we will merely continue in the tradition provided us in classical rhetorical theories and treatises. If we reflect for a moment about the state of basic course instruction, we really haven't moved too far away from the theories of communication provided us by the classical theorists. It's time we take some initiative to continue this emphasis, but move beyond these two thousand year old paradigms -- to improve our approach to communication instruction by testing our approaches and theories -- and broadening the application of these skills to help students become better prepared for the ongoing communication explosion that continues to grow in geometric progressions -- and prepare students to be effective communicators in the situations and with the technologies that affect our communication today and will affect our communication even more in the future.

Communication Competence

Communication competence is too complex to assess as the result of one course in communication. If we tell accrediting agencies, administrators in higher education, stage legislatures, and/or the general public that students are competent communicators when they "pass" one communication course; we are doomed to failure. Let's look at communication competence for a moment. A simple, yet preliminary, question is: What is communication competence? The literature offers little solidarity in this respect. For example, McCroskey (1982) focuses communication competence on knowledge. Knowing what to do is, according to McCroskey, the essential ingredient for communication competence. Other scholars focus competent communication on the performance of specific skills (Buerkel-Rothfuss, Gray, and Yerby, 1993; Pavitt and Haight, 1986; Duran, 1983). While still other scholars expect competent communicators to adapt to differing situations and communication contexts (Yoder, et al., 1993). Still other scholars expect competent communicators to formulate communication goals and achieve those goals (Wiemann, 1977).

Perhaps the best depiction of communication competence was offered by Gerry Phillips (1983). He suggests, "Defining 'competence' is like trying to climb a greased pole. Every time you think you have it, it slips" (p. 25). This has been the approach thus far in communication education. There appears to be disagreement on what communication competence is. John Daly at the recent SCA Summer Conference on Assessment argued that communication educators must come together to share a point of view on communication competence. If we continue to disagree, we will never be

able to get our arms around the concept: **communication competence**. Spitzberg (1983) offers an additional warning in approaching communication competence in writing, "while our discipline begins to develop instructional objectives to communication competency, it is important that our perspective of competence be precise enough to generate research and interdisciplinary respectability, and simultaneously broad enough to integrate diverse educational concerns" (p. 323).

It is my contention that we need to identify the specific skills we want students to understand and practice in the basic course. By identifying these skills, we will be in a better position to report students have improved in specific areas as a result of their experiences in the basic communication course. It is my also my contention that we need to examine, at the national level, this issue. Our discipline should be able to identify a core set of communication skills students should and could perform in the basic course. However, this is the exact problem -- we can't or won't do this. I think speech communication must move to a universally-applied model of appropriate communication skills to teach undergraduates in our basic courses. We are simply too far from this common approach at the present time. We teach interpersonal communication, public speaking, group communication and the hybrid course as our basic courses. Communication educators cannot even agree on an approach to the basic communication course. We need a common approach -- a common body of knowledge -- a common set of skills to teach our students. Failure to do this leads us down the path of self-destruction as budgets become tighter and accountability becomes even more of a driving force for self-preservation in the academy. If we cannot document our successes

in the basic course, then, as budgets become smaller, our courses and programs may not survive. If we even suggest students are competent communicators when they exit the basic course -- we are fools.

Communication Skills and Communication Competence

As mentioned above, communication competence is more than the communication skills that you or I possess. Communication educators should be able to teach and measure the student's understanding and performance of specific effective communication skills. We should be able to render a judgment related to the closeness of fit between the student's communication performance and the "ideal" model of communication performance in varying situations. Rubin (1991) suggests educators' ratings of students should be based on a set of "standard criteria" (p. 304). Since we have no clear-cut, discipline-accepted guidelines for the evaluation of communication skills, the same performance can be judged as "excellent" by one instructor, "average" by another instructor, and "below average" by still another instructor.

The problem here should be obvious to all communication educators. The differing approaches to communication competence, communication skill training, and assessment have left speech communication in a quagmire. These approaches have little, if any, validity in their application. [If you don't believe this statement, take a look at the various critique sheets that appear in our textbooks and instructors' manuals and are used in our courses for evaluation of student performances. If this doesn't convince you,

take five communication instructors using the same critique sheet and have them apply those criteria to the same communication performance. The differences in either case are, and will continue to be, astounding.]

The difference between focusing on communication competence and specific communication skills is dramatic. There is no hope of making a student a competent communicator in one course. There is an opportunity to having students know, practice, and master specific communication skills. Even if we focus our instruction on skill development for the individual student, there are problems. For example, no one would suggest that the same communication skills are appropriate for all communication contexts. We have to assess a student's application of the skills taught in the basic course in a variety of contexts to check their mastery of them. Different sets of skills are appropriate in different communication situations. Learning one set of skills or multiple sets of skills does not, in any way, assure a student will be a competent communicator in a future communication context. Rubin (1991) contends, "we must examine the impact of the context on communication behavior" (p. 305). Assessing the adequacy of communication skills and behaviors apart from the context in which it occurs and the relationship between and among the participants is at best arbitrary and is inherently biased. Communication is context specific. This is the way we teach it -- this is the way it is.

Another problem with the communication skills approach (even if it is the only way, in my opinion, to approach communication education) is our pedagogical focus on teaching one participant in the communication transaction effective communication skills

-- the listener **or** the speaker. If we believe, and some do, that communication competence is a set of skills employed by one person in the transaction, then the skills approach teaches communication competence. However, this is a position that is really difficult to defend. If the communication is competent, it is because all parties in the transaction receive mutual understanding, accomplish communication goals, and receive satisfaction from the transaction. If the communication transaction is **not** successful (not competent), by whatever criteria, to say that the speaker was competent and the listener was incompetent **or** to say that the listener was competent and the speaker was incompetent are both defenseless positions. I, and others, would contend that if the communication transaction was not successful, all participants were responsible -- and therefore were incompetent.

To conclude this section on the relationship between communication competence and communication skills, let's again return to Rebecca Rubin (1991). She applies systems theory to the relationship between communication skills and communication competence. She writes, "The communication skills movement, because of its focus on skill enhancement through instruction, provides instructional guidelines for each of the many skills comprising competence. Some have argued that these skills are much too specific and that the whole impression [of the communication transaction] if more than the sum of its parts" (p. 295).

Communication Skills and Instruction

A focus on communication skills is not a new phenomenon. It began two thousand- five hundred years ago in ancient Greece. The problem of what skills to teach, but more importantly, how to teach them started in ancient Greece, as well. Isocrates, a contemporary of Aristotle, wanted his students to speak on topics of significance (teaching approach). Isocrates founded the most successful school of rhetoric known to the Hellenic world. Cicero said of Isocrates' school that it was one in which the eloquence of all Greece was trained and perfected, mentioning some forty distinguished pupils to support his claim (XXII). Students from all over the world were attracted to this great teacher who required, above all else, that his students be well versed in speaking to the public issues of the day (Wagner, 1922). Isocrates, as a teacher of speaking, insisted that his students use broad, noble themes, "discourses not for petty disputes, but which deal with affairs of State, and are appropriate to be delivered at the Pan-Hellenic assemblies . . . " (Norlen, p. 213). Isocrates wrote, " . . . anyone elects to speak or write discourses which are worthy of praise and honour, it is not conceivable that he will support causes which are unjust or petty or devoted to private quarrels, and not rather those which are great and honourable, devoted to the welfare of man and our common good . . . " (Wagner, pp. 337-339). This approach, his method to teach specific communication (public speaking) skills to his students. Teaching methods should remain the purview of the individual instructor. However, the overall thrust of the beginning communication course -- skills and knowledge -- should be determined by the community of communication scholars.

To illustrate how far we have not moved in over two thousand-five hundred years,

let's take a look at what two communication scholars wrote not too very long ago. Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, in the concluding chapter of their book Speech Criticism (1948), argued for a return to the classical approaches to teaching students how to communicate. They wrote:

> The practical uses of rhetoric to which Aristotle referred are even more applicable to society today than they were to the Greeks of his time. True, the complexity of modern society makes it more difficult for every man [and women] to participate directly in the deliberations of assemblies in the administration of justice. Many of these duties have been delegated to men [and women] of professional rank in these callings. But every citizen still needs -- in fact, needs more imperatively today -- a familiarity with rhetoric, to the end that he may avail himself [or herself] of its advantages in the true Aristotelian sense: (1) of perceiving the difference between truth and error; (2) of understanding how people are moved to action, despite the absence of compelling argument; (3) of arguing both sides of a question in order to determine the truth; and (4) of being able to defend himself [or herself] with speech (p. 467).

Thonssen and Baird conclude their argument for the resurrection of traditional classical rhetorical theory by stating:

> The revival of certain features of the Isocratean doctrine is

> overdue. While holding to a defense of practical knowledge, Isocrates insisted that the individual strive for good conduct -- that he [or she] be a citizen whose ethical principles shone through his actions. The citizen was to be a cultivated speaker, "for the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul."
>
> In Isocrates' theory of culture, there was no room for discourses on petty and unjust causes. Instead, the themes were to be grand in their scope and nature, honorable in their motives, and "devoted to the welfare of man and our common good . . . ." The speakers were to embrace subjects of broad, almost universal character. Thus oratory and disciplined statesmanship were linked in common bond (p. 469).

It's not clear why there was such a call for this return to tradition in the mid-20th century. The rhetorical tradition taught us by Aristotle, Plato, Isocrates, and their contemporaries dominate communication instruction. We relied on these principles in the 1940s and today in the 1990s. This reliance on the rhetorical tradition is especially true in the public speaking course; which remains the most offered basic communication course in departments of communication across the country (Gibson, et al., 1992). We need to reexamine these fundamental principles and pedagogical approaches if we are to prepare students to be more than capable of practicing the skills our discipline has held

on to for twenty-five hundred years. Communication educators must capitalize on this tradition and expand it. If we want to teach communication consumer-ism, we need to turn the basic communication course around with this type of focus. These adjustments might be minor in some cases or major in other cases.

There is one traditional instructional approach that can be integrated into the basic communication classroom. To help students become better communication consumers in the future, make them address contemporary issues in their assignments -- like the way Isocrates wanted his students to do in his classes. Preparing assignments on important contemporary issues helps students understand the complexities of these issues in contemporary domestic and international relations. A focus on these issues in the basic communication course classroom is a way of emphasizing the importance of dialogue on these issues. It will illustrate to the students different perspectives on these issues and different ways of solving the problems the contemporary world faces.

Teaching Students to be "Good" Consumers

Communication education in the beginning communication course focuses on teaching students to be better senders -- not receivers. We teach students sender skills in preparation, analysis, delivery and more. This approach to communication pedagogy is the same, for the most part, in interpersonal, group, and public communication contexts. Pick up any beginning communication textbook and examine the contents. We see a dominant focus on skill development -- skill development on the part of the sender

of messages. There might be one chapter on receiver skills -- usually called "listening." If we are to teach students to become better communication consumers for the rest of their lives; we need to examine the foundations of our beginning communication courses. Perhaps the twenty-five hundred year tradition of teaching public speaking skills (and all of its derivatives), is not the dominant pedagogical approach appropriate for students who will spend most of their adult lives in the 21st century.

Teaching Communication Consumer-ism

Communication consumer-ism implies teaching students to be better receivers of communication in their lives. As mentioned above, we focus too much of our teaching and writing in textbooks to teaching speaking skills. My intention here is not to minimize the importance of teaching these all-important skills; but to adjust the overall objectives of the basic communication course and the ways we teach these communication skills and incorporate alternative application of these skills. If we are to be successful in preparing students to be educated communication consumers, we need to change the way we do things.

Listening Skills. Our textbooks and courses have focused receiver training on listening. This is a fundamental approach to teaching receiver skills. Focusing on the various types of listening -- empathic listening, content listening, etc. -- only supplies the solid foundation upon which to teach communication consumer-ism to our students. Currently, we end up teaching skills in paraphrasing, asking questions, restatement, note taking, improving memory, etc. in our basic courses. These are important skills for

students to learn and practice in the basic course, but they do not teach students to be educated consumers of communication in their daily lives.

Just like students need to learn how to multiply and divide before they can do algebra; so too, students need to learn how to listen before they can become educated communication consumers. Communication educators can teach speaking and listening skills in much the same way they have been doing -- with some adjustments to emphasize a focus on the receiver. Let's examine four areas I think we can teach to help students to be better consumers of communication. Obviously, these are not all the areas we could include in helping student to become better consumers of communication; they are starting points -- places for communication educators to begin. These areas include: organization, supporting materials, reasoning, and credibility.

Organization. Students learn the importance of organizing their messages in every basic communication course. In addition, they learn various options to organizing information they want to share with others (a very Westernized approach to organization). Why do communication educators insist on teaching organization? I think there are several reasons:

1] We have done it for twenty-five hundred years.

2] We believe that a message organized in one of the various patterns we teach is a "better" message.

3] We tell students that their listeners expect a message to be organized.

4] It helps listeners to understand our messages if we organize

the messages for them.

What proof or research results do we have that organization makes any difference at all? The answer is: we have little if any. What organizational patterns are better in specific situations? The answer is: we don't know. Do receivers of messages focus on the organization of a message they receive? The answer is: not very often.

If statement #4 above is true; when do we teach receivers the importance of organization, what organization means, and how messages should be organized? The answer is: we don't -- really. This is a significant problem in our teaching students communication consumer-ism. We need to teach students, as listeners, about organization. In communication textbooks, authors do not take the approach that instructors can turn the sender skills around and teach them as receiver skills too. If we can educate receivers about organization, we can teach them to examine the organization of the communication they receive. Teaching organization skills to receivers is important because it establishes the expectations in the communication situation. This type of instruction will also help us teach and research organization as it applies to specific communication situations. One of our problems is we teach students preparing to send messages, to make an educated guess about organizing their messages for receivers. Do we know if these decisions are good or bad? Is one organizational pattern better than other patterns with specific audiences in specific situations? We don't know the answer to these questions -- and this is a definite problem in the communication classroom.

Communication educators do not know a lot about organization; we just teach it. We **assume** organizing messages is better than a lack of organization. In fact, there is

some research to suggest organizing messages doesn't matter to the receiver. If we are convinced that organizing communication is important, then we need to teach organization from the perspective of the receiver as well as the sender. We have all witnessed student communication in the classroom that is poorly organized but effective in getting the message across to the listeners. How do we then explain this phenomenon? One explanation, that we cannot ignore, is the fact that receivers may not expect messages to be organized.

Related to instructing the receiver about organization is the receiver's perception of the sender's use of supporting materials in the message.

Supporting Materials. Basic communication courses include an emphasis on using supporting materials in communication (especially public speeches). The term "supporting material" means the inclusion of a great many things, depending on the textbook used or the instructor's teaching preferences. The following is not meant to be an all-inclusive listing: statistics, testimony, examples, visual aids, quotations, metaphors, and illustrations. We teach these various forms of support to be important sender skills. We emphasize the importance of using support appropriately in the basic communication course from the sender's point of view. We explain the importance of these forms of support, give examples (both in class discussions and textbooks) of these forms of support, and expect students to use supporting materials in their assignments.

It would not be too difficult to alter some of this instruction to focus on the receiver's point of view, too. For example, in teaching statistics we teach the use of the various types of statistics to help students to support their ideas. Why not teach how to

question statistics from the point of view of the receiver? The book How to Lie with Statistics (1954), although dated, is an instructional tool to be used to teach how to question statistics when we hear them. This book illustrates how we can manipulate statistics to say almost whatever we want. If we teach receivers to question the statistics they receive, we help them learn some of the skills of being a better communication consumer. In the following three typical examples, statistics are used by senders to support their ideas and "impress" receivers. Each example also includes some healthy skepticism related to the statistics included.

Example #1. When we hear someone say that 9 out of 10 dentists choose Crest toothpaste, we can ask some obvious questions. Among them are: [1] How many dentists were asked their toothpaste preference? [2] How were the dentists, who were asked their toothpaste question, selected? [3] What other brands of toothpaste do these dentists prefer Crest toothpaste over? Each of these questions can add some insight into how a receiver should understand or interpret these statistics.

Example #2. How do we, as consumers, interpret the estimated miles per gallon new cars receive posted on the window stickers in showrooms? The fact that these numbers are created by driving a car in ideal conditions (correct temperature, no wind,

no rain, no snow, etc.) and in an ideal environment (no hills or stop-and-go traffic) are important factors in comprehending how these numbers are determined.

Example #3. When we learn that our favorite television program received a twelve percent market share, what does that mean? How are these numbers determined? How are households and viewers selected to participate in these ratings? Is the 12% share good or bad? In comparison to the highest rated programs receiving a 30-35% market share, a 12% share doesn't, at face value, seem too bad -- does it?

In each of these examples, the statistics appear to be easy enough to understand. They probably are -- at an initial review. But the ways these numbers are created is important and that is what we need to teach students. Teaching healthy skepticism is important if we, as communication educators, are to prepare students to be better communication consumers. It is insufficient to tell students to be skeptical of the statistics they are exposed to. They may not know how to be skeptical in these situations. A person cannot be skeptical if they do not know what to be skeptical about or how to be skeptical. We have to teach them how to be skeptical if we want them to be better communication consumers.

Another area of concern, in teaching students to be better communication

consumers, is the use of quotations and testimony. If senders use testimony or quotations, receivers need to know how to assess their value related to the message. A quotation or a bit of testimony taken out of context can change the meaning of what the original person said. We could argue that this is an unethical practice by the sender -- but we are talking about preparing a student to be an educated communication consumer. In the real world, we have to show our students that people are unethical. Ethical considerations aside, we need to teach students to understand quotations and testimony.

Reasoning. Related to the use of supporting materials is reasoning. We emphasize reasoning (Western reasoning and thinking) in our basic communication courses. Instructors look for reasoning and logic in evaluating student assignments in our courses. We tell students their reasoning must be "sound." We teach there must be a clear relationship between claims and evidence. The Toulmin Model of Reasoning is a frequently referred to method of establishing and demonstrating relationships between claims and evidence. Students, in the basic course, are expected to review the relationships between their ideas and their claims (conclusions) as they prepare their speeches and other assignments. The data-warrant-claim trilogy has become an accepted method for examining these relationships in the preparation of speeches. In communication preparation, senders can use this trilogy to help make sense of their own communication and to, the best they can, assess how well their claims are supported by the data they use. This data-warrant-claim trilogy is an easy method to adapt to make receiver-oriented in evaluating messages. In teaching receivers to identify claims; we can

teach them to assess whether or not the claim is "warranted" by the data the supporting materials the sender presents.

There are multiple ways instructors teach reasoning in their basic communication classes. Each method can be altered helping receivers to assess the reasoning used in the messages they receive. Skills in assessing claims is one of the most important tools we can teach students as we attempt to prepare them to become better consumers of communication. As with the other topics already discussed, assessing claims depends on the good listening skills taught to receivers. If students do not listen well, they have difficulty in identifying claims and relating supporting materials appropriately to the sender's claims.

Credibility. Although a concept from ancient Greece and our rhetorical history, credibility (ethos) remains important in contemporary communication. Receivers are concerned with the credibility of the sender and her or his ideas. Receivers are the sole determinants of the sender's credibility. There are several approaches communication educators use to teach credibility. One way we teach credibility in the basic course is to focus on the characteristics of the sender (speaker). We focus on their knowledge, experience, dynamism, enthusiasm, etc. in teaching credibility. In doing this, communication educators emphasize the importance of credibility -- from the point of view of the sender. This is only one perspective of credibility. We want students to be concerned with the characteristics of their credibility as they prepare and deliver their messages in class. Instructors want students to be knowledgeable -- so they conduct research. Instructors want students to demonstrate their experience -- so they analyze

their background. Instructors what students to be dynamic and enthusiastic in delivering their messages -- so they practice and rehearse. What do we say about credibility from the point of view of the receiver as they listen to a message? The answer is: not much; but we should.

A second way to consider credibility in communication situations is to examine the source of information used by the sender. Communication educators instruct students to use material from specific sources receivers will believe and place some confidence. Although taking into account the receivers of information, communication educators do not emphasize them. This is the needed alternative in our pedagogical approaches to communication education in our basic courses. Receivers have to determine if they will or will not believe information based, in part or in total, on the sources of that information. Talking about specific examples (Newsweek, USA Today, etc.), and frequently extreme examples (Time vs. National Enquirer), is insufficient in exploring the credibility of information. Communication educators **must** teach students how to evaluate the sources of information. If we don't, it will be difficult for us to prepare students to be better communication consumers.

Conclusion

To address our responsibility to help students become better consumers of communication in the future, I have argued for three things:

1] a continued emphasis on skills

2] a dedication to the inclusion of contemporary issues into the basic communication course

3] a re-orientation of our instruction to incorporate a receiver-oriented approach to teaching some of the same skills we do in our traditional sender-oriented approach.

The skills we teach rely on and expose the tradition of our discipline. We need to continue teaching these skills -- with an added emphasis on listening skills. These listening skills lay the foundation for all the other things a receiver can do to be a better consumer of the messages he or she hears.

It is our responsibility to include an emphasis on the contemporary issues of the day in our classes. For the most part, people are poorly prepared to engage in an educated discussion of most contemporary issues -- whatever the issues are now or will be in the future. Students prepare assignments, conduct research, respond to questions, and engage in a dialogue on relevant issues in the classroom. In these processes, classmates listen to different points of view on these issues and different approaches to addressing some of these problems. This is the beginning to the process of re-orienting our beginning communication classes to increase the emphasis on receiver analytic, reasoning, and communication skills.

To complete the process of being socially responsible in our basic communication classes, we must add a receiver emphasis. Communication educators must teach students to be skeptical of messages they receive. Four places to begin teaching this skepticism

were identified: [1] organization, [2] supporting materials, [3] reasoning, and [4] credibility. This emphasis on receiver-oriented pedagogy will not force communication educators to drastically change personal approaches to teaching communication -- it will require us to alter pedagogical approaches to incorporate this receiver orientation.

If we fail in any of these three areas, we fail our students -- our colleagues -- our universities -- our discipline -- but more importantly, we fail our society.

WORKS CITED

Buerkel-Rothfuss, N.L., Gray, P.L., & Y. rby, J. (1993). The structured model of competency-based instruction. Communication Education, 42, 22-36.

Cicero, M.T. Brutus VIII De Oratore II, XXII.

Duran, R. (1983). Communication adaptability: A measure of social communicative competence. Communication Quarterly, 31, 320-326.

Gibson, G.W., Hanna, M.S., & Leichty, G. (1990). The basic speech course at United States colleges and universities: V. In Basic Communication Course Annua. II, edited by L.W. Hugenberg. Boston, MA: American Press. 233-257.

Huff, D. How to Lie With Statistics. New York: W.W. Norton, 1954.

McCroskey, J. (1982). Communication competence and performance: A research and pedagogical perspective. Communication Education, 31, 1-7.

Norlen, G., Trans. (1928). Isocrates. The Loeb Library II.

Pavitt, C. & Haight, L. (1986). Implicit theories of communication competence: Situational and competence level differences in judgments of prototype and target. Communication Monographs, 53, 221-235.

Phillips, G.M. (1983). A competent view of competence. Communication Education, 32, 25-36.

Rubin, R.B. (1991). Perspectives on communication competence. In G.M. Phillips, Communication Incompetencies: A Theory of Training Oral Performance Behavior. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 289-305. [Reprinted from Speech Communication: Essays to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Speech Communication Association, edited by G.M. Phillips and J.T. Wood. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Spitzberg, B.H. (1983). Communication competence as knowledge, skill, and impression. Communication Education, 32, 323-329.

Thonssen, L. and Baird, A.C. (1948). Speech Criticism. New York: Ronald Press, Co.

Wagner, R.H. (1922). The rhetorical theory of Isocrates. Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, 323-333.

Wiemann, J.M. (1977). A description of competent and incompetent communication behavior. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Washington, D.C.

Yoder, D., Hugenberg, L.W., & Wallace, S. (1993). Creating Communication Competence. Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark. Publishers.